

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 130345Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1182

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 12391

FOLLOWING TEL SENT NEW DELHI INFO MADRAS AND CALCUTTA
SEPT 11, 1975, REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOMBAY 2321

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN

SUBJ: BOMBAY CONSULAR DISTRICT APPRASIAL OF THE EMERGENCY

REF: NEW DELHI 12043

1. POLITICAL: SINCE MID-AUGUST THERE HAS BEEN NO OPPOSITION
ACTIVITY OF CONSEQUENCE - OVERT OR CLANDESTINE - IN THE BOMBAY
CONSULAR DISTRICT. EFFORTS TO COURT ARREST BY MEANS OF SATYAGRAHA
OR TO MANIFEST DISSENT BY OTHER MEANS HAVE LARGELY CEASED SINCE
THE AUG 15 FLAG-RAISING CEREMONIES AS HAS THE CLANDESTINE
DISSEMINATION OF OPPOSITION LITERATURE. RECENT ARRESTS HAVE
HELPED BRING ABOUT THE LATTER. FROM OUT VANTAGE POINT MRS.
GANDHI HAS CONSOLIDATED HER POSITION AND HAS NOTHING TO FEAR
EXCEPT THE ACTION OF AN EXTREMIST. THE BASIC FACTOR IN THIS
IS THE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION EFFORTS IN THE AFTERMATH
OF JUNE 26, HAS JUST NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING AND IN GUJARAT AS
WELL. IT JUST ISN'T THERE AND THE OPPOSITION KNOWS IT.

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2. THE OPPOSITION FOR THE MOST PART IS DISENCHANTED, DEMORALIZED

AND IN A STATE OF DISARRAY. IT LACKS LEADERSHIP AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE. IN ITS VIEW ALL INITIATIVE NOW RESTS WITH MRS. GANDHI. THE WEAKNESS OF THE OPPOSITION IS PERHAPS BEST INDICATED BY THE INCREASING NUMBER OF THOSE CALLING FOR A DIALOGUE WITH MRS. GANDHI SUCH AS MINOO MASANI AND SOCIALIST PARLIAMENTARIAN GORAY. INSOFAR AS WE CAN TELL THE OPPOSITION FINDS ITSELF HELPLESS AND SEES NO OTHER COURSE BUT TO FIND A GRACEFUL WAY OUT SINCE IT IS UNDER NO ILLUSION THAT MRS. GANDHI IS LIKELY TO MAKE ANY SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS TO A POWERLESS AND DIVIDED OPPOSITION. THE WEAKNESS OF THE OPPOSITION IS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE THINNING OUT OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL RANKS IN KEEPING WITH INDIAN POLITICAL TRADITION THAT YOU GET ON THE BANDWAGON RATHER THAN STICK WITH A LOST CAUSE.

3. MAHARASHTRA IS QUIET, OPPOSITION ACTIVITY HAS ALMOST TOTALLY VANISHED FROM THE SCENE AND RULING CONGRESS IN COMPLETE CONTROL. THE SITUATION IS QUIET IN THE MP AS WELL WITH OPPOSITION ACTIVITY NEGLIGIBLE. THE RESIGNATIONS FROM THE JANA SANGH, THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY THERE, HAVE REACHED "ALARMING PROPORTIONS" ACCORDING TO JANA SANGH SOURCES LOCALLY. THIS DUE IN PART TO HEAVY-HANDED TACTICS BY CHIEF MIN SETHI WHO HAS BOTH WANTED TO IMPRESS DELHI AS WELL AS QUIET EARLIER ALLEGATIONS THAT HE HAD ESTABLISHED UNOFFICIAL LINKS WITH JANA SANGH FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT. JANA SANGH MEMBERS LIKE THE MAHARAJAH OF GWALIOR ARE ALSO RESIGNING IN ORDER TO TRY TO PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS. REGARDLESS OF MOTIVATION, THE RANKS OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE DISTRICT ARE THINNING OUT. IN GUJARAT THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED DECLINE IN OPPOSITION ACTIVITY AND THE PARTICIPATION OF THE JANATA FRONT GOVT IN IT. THE LATTER HAS MOVED WITH CAUTION SINCE AUG 15 AND SOUGHT INCREASINGLY TO AVOID ACTIONS THAT COULD INVITE RETALIATION BY DELHI AND TO OFFSET THE GENERAL IMPRESSION THAT IT IS TOLERANT OF OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES AND PERSONALITIES. THE FACT IS THAT POPULAR SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION TO THE EMERGENCY AND MRS. GANDHI IS JUST NOT THERE NOR HAVE THE GUJARATI STUDENTS SEEN FIT TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN SUCH A STRUGGLE. JANATA FRONT MINISTERS NO LONGER ATTEND PUBLIC OPPOSITION MEETINGS AND THE GOVT HAS CRACKED DOWN ON THE PRINTING OF CLANDESTINE LITERATURE IN GUJARAT FOR DISSEMINATION IN BOMBAY AND ELSEWHERE. AS A SIGN AS TO WHICH WAY THE WIND IS BLOWING, OLD CONGRESS LEADER HITENDRA DESAI IS EXPECTED TO JOIN THE RULING CONGRESS BY THE END OF THE MONTH. EX-CHIEF MIN CHIMANBHAI PATEL HAS TOLD US THAT

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HE IS UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM WITHIN KMLP TO SUPPORT RULING CONGRESS SINCE MEMBERS FEEL THAT THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS ARE BEING JEOPARDIZED BY SUPPORTING JANATA FRONT. CHIMANBHAI HIMSELF, WE ARE TOLD, WANTS TO JOIN RULING CONGRESS BUT MRS. GANDHI IS NOT READY TO TAKE HIM BACK.

4. INSOFAR AS WE CAN TELL THERE HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW POLITICAL ARRESTS IN RECENT WEEKS IN THIS DISTRICT WITH MOST OCCUR-

ING FOR ECONOMIC OFFENSES. IN MAHARASHTRA AT LEAST WE UNDERSTAND THAT SECOND AND THIRD RANK POLITICAL DETAINEES ARE BEING RELEASED AND ONLY KEP OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADERS BEING HELD. GEORGE FERNANDES IS THE ONLY KEY OPPOSITION LEADER IN THIS AREA TO STILL BE AT LARGE. WE ARE TOLD THAT HE IS BEING CLOSELY WATCHED BY THE POLICE WHO DO WISH TO TAKE HIM INTO CUSTODY SINCE THEY PREFER TO KEEP TRACK OF ALL WHO CONTACT HIM.

5. WHILE THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY SIGNIFICANT POPULAR SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION ACTIVITY, WE ARE NOT CHARACTERIZE THE EMERGENCY AND MRS. GANDHI'S ACTIONS AS "POPULAR" WITH PEOPLE GENERALLY. VARIOUS COMPULSIONS AND MOTIVATIONS OPERATE TO BRING ABOUT AN ATTITUDE OF RESIGNATION OR ACCEPTANCE ON THE PART OF MOST AND WITH IT THE INEVITABLE RATIONALIZATIONS TO JUSTIFY IT.

A) THE MUSLIMS, TRIBALS, HARIJANS AND RURAL POOR - ALL OF WHOM IDENTIFY WITH MRS. GANDHI AND TLOOK TO HER PERSONALLY - HOPE THEY ARE GOING TO GET A BETTER DEAL FROM HER AND HENCE CAN BE SAID TO WELCOME THE EMERGENCY AND STEPS THAT SHE HAS TAKEN.

B) THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TAKE A FAVORABLE VIEW OF THE EMERGENCY AND WHAT MRS. GANDHI HAS DONE. SHE HAS RULED OUT NATIONALIZATION, STRESSED PRODUCTION, DECREED INDUSTRIAL PEACE, SPEEDED UP BUREAUCRACY, BROUGHT ABOUT LAW AND ORDER, ETC. SO LONG AS SHE MAINTAINS HER PRESENT POSTURE, THEY ARE HAPPY AND SHE CAN COUNT ON THEM TO CONTRIBUTE GENEROUSLY AS IN THE PAST TO CONGRESS CAMPAIGN COFFERS.

C) ORGANIZED LABOR IN THE DISTRICT GOES ACCORDING TO ITS UNION'S POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND FOR THE MOST PART THESE (E.G., INTUC, AND PART OF HMS) INCLUDING THE CPI-AFFILIATED UNIONS (E.G., AITUC) ARE SUPPORTING MRS. GANDHI AND THE EMERGENCY. THE UNION WORKER IS LOOKING TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRO-LABOR POLICIES.

D) STUDENT ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT INCLUDING GUJARAT
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IS NOMAL AND YTUDENTS GENERALLY APPEAR TO BE UNWILLING OR DISINCLINED TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN OPPOSITION EFFORTS AGAINST THE EMERGENCY.

E) INsofar AS WE CAN TELL THE MIDDLE-CLASS INTELLECTUALS - THE ACADEMICS, JOURNALISTS, PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE, MIDDLE-LEVEL EXECUTIVES, ETC. - DO NOT LIKE THE EMERGENCY, CENSORSHIP AND THE LOSS OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS. BUT BY AND LARGE, THEY ACCEPT IT. MANY WILL SPEAK CRITICALLY IN PRIVATE BUT NOT PUBLICLY NOR ARE THEY PREPARED TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO ARREST. THEY SEE LITTLE PROSPECT OF ANY REAL CHANGE IN THE SITUATION. ON SCHOOL OF THOUGHT IN THESE CIRCLES IS THAT NOTHING WILL CHANGE SO LONG AS MRS. GANDHI LIVES. IN MEANWHILE, ONLY AVENUE REMAINING IS TO CALL FOR A DIALOGUE AND FIND A PEG OR CONVENIENT FORMULA TO ADJUST TO THE REALITIES OF THE INDIAN SCENE. JOURNALISTS IN PARTICULAR DISLIKE CENSORSHIP BUT THEY ARSN'T ABOUT TO TEMPT FATE OR DO

ANYTHING ABOUT IT. IN FACT, THERE JUST AREN'T MANY MARTYRS AROUND
OR MANY WHO FEEL THAT BECOMING A MARTYR OR GOING TO JAIL WILL
SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE.

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1183

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 12391

F) WHILE THE CIVIL SERVANT HAVE GREATER SCOPE AND
LATITUDE UNDER THE EMERGENCY AND ENJOY LESS POLITICAL INTERFERENCE,
THEY FEEL THAT THIS IS A SITUATION OF LIKELY SHORT
DURATION AND ONE THAT COULD LEAD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
"COMMITTED" BUREAUCRACY IN MUCH THE SAME MANNER AS IS APPARENTLY
TAKING PLACE IN THE JUDICIARY. GREATER ATTENTION TO DUTY, ETC.,
APPEARS TO BE MOTIVATED MORE BY FEAR THAN A DESIRE TO DO A
BETTER JOB. THEY APPEAR TO BE CONCERNED IN CONSIDERABLE
MEASURE WITH THE RETENTION OF THEIR JOBS.

G) AS FOR RULING CONGRESS POLITICIANS, MANY DO NOT LIKE
THE EMERGENCY AND ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED, PARTICULARLY THE MORE
CONSERVATIVE, BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION OF ANY INTERNAL DISSENTION
OR REVOLT. FOR THE MOST PART, THEY ARE PLEASED WITH THE TURN OF
EVENTS AND FEEL THAT GREATER CONTROLS ARE NECESSARY AND THAT
LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS ARE A LUXURY THAT
A COUNTRY LIKE INDIA CAN ILL-AFFORD. THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL
PARTIES ARE IN A SHAMBLES, LABOR STRIFE AND LAW AND ORDER
PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY, CENSORSHIP REDUCES
THE RISK OF EXPOSURE FOR SCANDALS, AND PARTY FACTIONALISM IS AT
A LOW EBB IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, IN SUM, TO
A CONGRESS POLITICIAN IN MAHARASHTRA AND M.P., AND WE BELIEVE

THIS IS INCREASINGLY THE CASE IN GUJARAT, HE SEES HIS POLITICAL FUTURE AS GUARANTEED ASSUMING HE KEEPS ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE POWERS THAT BE.
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6. ECONOMIC: ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESCAPE THE CONCLUSION THAT NOT A GREAT DEAL HAS REALLY EMERGED FROM THE EMERGENCY, DESPITE THE OBVIOUS WISHES OF THE STATE GOVERNMENTS TO LEAD THE PEOPLE TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE. WE HAVE NOT CHANGED OUR ORIGINAL ASSESSMENT THAT NO REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN THE CONDITION OF THE MASSES WILL TAKE PLACE AS A RESULT OF THE EMERGENCY, EVEN IF THE PROMISES ARE FULFILLED. ON THE OTHER HAND, SINCE THE RAIN-BLESSED SHORT RUN PROMISES A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN LIVING STANDARDS, OR AT LEAST NO SLIKE BACKWARDS, WE SEE NO SHORT-TERM THREAT TO POLTIICAL STABILITY ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE.

7. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATIONOF LAND REFORM AND DEBT RELIEF MEASURES AT GRASSROOT LEVELS IS STILL DISTANT PROSPECT,BUT THE RURAL MASSES PROBABLY REALLY DO NOT EXPECT MUCH. INDEED, IN A LAND WHERE SUFFERING BY THE MASSES IS ENDEMIC, THE RURAL POPULATION WILL PROBABLY BE HAPPY IF THINGS DO NOT WORSEN AND ANY IMPROVEMENTS, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, WILL BE WELCOMED. IN OUR DISTRICT, STATE GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAVE EEN DRAGGING THEIR FEET ON LAND REFORM FOR TWO DECADES ARE NOT LIEKLY TO BE GENUINELY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IT NOW, AND THE ALL-POWERFUL KULAKS WILL NOT GIVE IN EASILY ON THIS VITAL ISSUE. FROM ANOTHER ANGLE, IT IS QUESTIONALBLE WHETHER IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND REFORM PROP O-SALS WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON RURAL LIVING STANDARDS IF THE NUMBER OF LANDLESS AFFECTED IS A SMALL PORPORTIONOF THE TOTAL AND MASSIVE INVESTMENTS ARE LACKING TO ESTABLISH COOPERATIVE ASSISTANCE IN PRODUCTION AND MARKETING FOR OWNERS OF TINE PLOTS. ACCORDINGLY, DESPITE CONSIDERABLE SOUND AND FURY AND OSTENSIBLE MOVEMENT, WE SIMPLY DO NOT EXPECT LAND REFORM TO GO VERY FAR.

8. WHILE IT HAS SOMEWHAT MORE LIMITED POLITICAL IMPLICATION THEN LAND REFORM, THE DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM HAS CONSIDERABLE POPULIST APPEAL AND APPEARS TO BE RECEIVING SOMEWHAT GREATER PUSH THAN LAND REFORM. HOWEVER, AS WE HAVE REPORTED BEFORE, THE ABSENCE OF ALTERNATE SOURCES OF CREDIT COULD CAUSE GREAT HARDSHIP TO VILLAGERS AND THERE IS STILL SOME DOUBT WHETHER THE FIFTY RURAL BANKS - IF THEY ARE EVER SET UP - WOULD REPLACE THE CENTURIES OLD SYSTEM OF RURAL MONELENDERS. OVERLOOKED IN THE GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED ENTHUSIASM OVER DEBT IS THE
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ADMINSTRATIVE CHALLENGE THAT STAGGERS THE IMAGINATION
OF THE MORE THOUGHTFUL OBSERVER OF THE PROBLEM.

9. IT OCCURS TO US THAT MORE IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF
MRS. GANDHI'S PROGRAM THAN THE RURAL MASSES ARE THE URBAN
FACTORY WORKERS, CLERKS, SMALL TRADERS, ETC. UNLIKE THE RURAL
MASSES WHOSE CAPACITY FOR SUFFERING SEEMS UNLIMITED, THE CITY
DWELLER COULD BE AROUSED IF THINGS GET WORSE. THOSE WHOSE
EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED BY THE EMERGENCY WILL BE DISSATIS-
FIED IF THEIR LIVES DO NOT IMPROVE, IF ONLY SLIGHTLY. IN THIS
REGARD, PRESS TYPES TELL US THAT IF MRS. GANDHI SHOULD CALL
ELECTIONS, IT IS THE URBAN AREAS WHERE SHE MIGHT LOSE SOME GROUND.

10. BUSINESSMEN, GENERALLY HAPPY FROM THE POLITICAL SIDE AND
STILL HOPING TO PROFIT FROM THE EMERGENCY, ARE BEGINNING TO EXPRESS
SOME CONCERN ABOUT THEIR FUTURE, WHICH COULD BE THREATENED BY
MID-LEVEL OFFICIALS WITH ARBITRARY POWERS TO ENFORCE UNREASONABLE
LAWS. ADDITIONALLY, THEY ARE BEGINNING TO BE UNEASY THAT THEY
MAY BE CALLED ON TO EXPLAIN ACTIONS OF THE PAST WHEN "THE
SYSTEM WORKED". AS INDICATED ABOVE, UNION LEADERS ARE
GENERALLY SUPPORTING MRS. GANDHI AND THE EMERGENCY AND THE
WORKER IS LOOKING TO THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT PRO-LABOR
POLICIES, ALTHOUGH THE FEW REAL TRADER UNIONISTS WE KNOW ARE
CONCERNED THAT LABOR HAS BEEN PUSHED ASIDE.

11. THERE IS STILL CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM THAT THE TWENTY POINT
PROGRAM WILL SOLVE THE LONG-RUN PROBLEMS OF THE INDIAN
ECONOMY ALTHOUGH OVERALL THERE NOW SEEMS TO BE GROWING ACCEP-
TANCE OF AND/OR INDIFFERENCE TO THE EMERGENCY. IN AN AREA
DOMINATED BY THE MONSOON PSYCHOLOGY, THE EXTREMELY FAVORABLE
CROP PROSPECTS TEND TO BECLOUD OTHER ISSUES AND CREATE A KIND
OF EUPHORIA ON THE PART OF A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION.
MANY OF THE MEASURES IMPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT - THE MOVE
AGAINST THE SMUGGLERS, THE INVESTIGATION OF LUXURY APARTMENTS,
ETC. - ARE APPROVED BY MANY PEOPLE. PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANTLY,
WE THINK WE SEE A RETIONALIZATION, A KIND OF JUSTIFICATION OF
WHAT HAPPENED. PRICES HAVE LEVELED OFF BUT THEY ARE STILL
LOWER THAN LAST YEAR. EVEN THOUGHTFUL INDIANS ARE BEGINNING TO
WONDER IF IN FACT THE EMERGENCY DIDN'T HAVE LOTS TO DO WITH IT.
INCREASED PRODUCTION AND INCOME MAY NOT OUTPACE POPULATION
GROWTH, BUT THOSE ARE TERMS THAT DO NOT MEAN A GREAT DEAL TO
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THE AVERAGE INDIAN. IF THERE IS PLENTY OF FOOD THIS YEAR AT
REASONABLE PRICES, WE BELIEVE MRS. GANDHI WILL CONTINUE TO
HAVE IT MADE IN THE SHORT RUN AND, AT LEAST AS FAR AS THE
CONSULAR DISTRICT IS CONCERNED, IT WOULD BE FRUITLESS TO LOOK
TOO HARD FOR DISSATISFACTION OR UNREST.

12. THE WAY THE SITUATION IS EVOLVING POLITICALLY IN THIS DISTRICT HAS LED TO INCREASED SPECULATION THAT MRS. GANDHI WILL END THE EMERGENCY BY DECEMBER AND HOLD ELECTION SIN FEBRUARY OR MURCH. THIS APPEARS TO BE PREDICATED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE OPPOSITION HAS FAILED TO POSE AN EFFECTIVE CHALLENGE TO MRS. GANDHI AND THAT THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING SHE HAS EVERY PROSPECT OF OBTAINING AN OVERWHELMING ENDORSEMENT AND LANDSLIDE VOTE AT THE POLLS. POLITICALLY AT LEAST, MRS. GANDHI'S POSITION IN WESTERN INDIA APPEARS TO BE QUITE SECURE AT PRESENT. HOWEVER, WITH A HELPLESS OPPOSITION AND WITH EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF MRS. GANDHI'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM IN DOUBT, FRUSTRATIONS ARE LIKELY TO MOUNT WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME WHICH COULD THREATEN MRS. GANDHI'S POSITION AND LEAD TO THE IMPOSITION OF GREATER CONTROLS.

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